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PROGRAMMING AND COORDINATION MATTERS RELATED TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Improvement on the status of women in the Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

1. In resolution 48/106 of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly welcomed the development by the Secretary-General of a plan of action for 1993 and 1994 to improve the status of women in the Secretariat by 1995, and urged him to implement that plan fully, noting that his visible commitment was essential to the achievement of the targets set by the General Assembly.

2. In the same resolution, the Assembly urged the Secretary-General to accord greater priority to the recruitment and promotion of women in posts subject to geographical distribution, particularly in senior policy-level and decision-making posts and within those parts of the United Nations system and the specialized agencies where representation of women was considerably below the average, in order to achieve the goals set in resolutions 45/125, 45/239 C, 46/100 and 47/93 of an overall participation rate of 35 per cent by 1995 and 25 per cent in posts at the D-1 level and above by 1995; the Assembly also called on the Secretary-General to strengthen, from within existing resources, the focal point for women within the Secretariat to ensure authority of enforcement and responsibility of accountability and to enable it more effectively to monitor ard facilitate progress in the 1995 action programme.

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* E/CN.6/1994/1.

3. Also in resolution 48/106, the Assembly urged the Secretary-General to increase the number of women employed in the Secretariat from developing countries, particularly those that were unrepresented or underrepresented, and from other countries that had a low representation of women, including countries in transition; and requested the Secretary-General to further develop comprehensive policy measures aimed at the prevention of sexual harassment in the Secretariat.

4. In the same resolution, the Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/48/513), which described the current situation and developments during the period July 1992 to June 1993. The present report provides brief updated information on percentages contained in that report and on relevant events since June 1993.

I. STATISTICAL UPDATE

5. In paragraph 4 of the Secretary-General's report (A/48/513), it was stated that the proportion of women in posts subject to geographical distribution was 31.3 per cent in June 1993. This figure did not reflect the results of the grade-by-grade promotion exercise of 1992, which had become available by November 1993. Thus, in the six months ending 31 December 1993, the percentage rose from 31.3 to 32.0. At the end of December 1993, there were 826 women in posts subject to geographical distribution compared with 1,758 men.

6. In terms of policy-level and decision-making posts (D-1 and above), women occupied 13.6 per cent of such posts by December 1993, but the disparity between women and men at those levels continued to be a matter of concern. As of December 1993, staff in policy-level and decision-making posts totalled 345 persons, of which 298 were men and 47 women.

7. The promotion of 10 women to the P-5 level between 1 July 1992 and 30 June 1993 increased the number in posts subject to geographical distribution from 93 to 103, thus contributing to the building of a pool of Professional women for promotion to higher levels in the near future.

II. SIGNIFICANT EVENTS SINCE JUNE 1993

8. The period June 1993 to February 1994 is marked by attempts at integrating the goals and mandates for the enhancement of women into the regular management and personnel processes of the Secretariat.

9. The implementation of Releases I and II of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) will soon allow the Office of Human Resources Management and other departments to have quick and accurate access to statistics and information which will be invaluable in planning and forecasting to bring about gender equality.

10. On 15 November 1993, a new placement and promotion system (ST/AI/390) came into effect. The key feature of the system is that it provides for the

announcement of vacancies as they occur or are foreseen, and for a continuous and comprehensive review of staff for placement or promotion against those vacancies. This would increase the transparency of the placement and promotion processes. A significant feature for women is that, before a post is filled, a department/office must provide documented evidence of its efforts to identify women candidates, particularly for posts at the P-5 level and above (ST/AI/390, para. 13). This feature, combined with broad advertising of vacancies internally and externally, is expected to increase the ability of the Secretariat to recruit and place women.

11. In ST/SGB/266 of 5 November 1993, the Secretary-General announced the establishment of a new Senior Review Group which was to make recommendations to him concerning the filling of vacancies at the D-2 and higher levels. The Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat has proposed to the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management that the regular monitoring tables on D-1 and above be forwarded to the Senior Review Group to apprise its members of the latest situation of women vis-à-vis the target of 25 per cent, thereby assisting them in making their recommendations.

12. The Advisory Panel on Management and Finance (ST/SGB/270 of 14 January 1994), which is composed of all senior managers at Headquarters, is another management instrument which is proposed to be used to achieve the goals of equality for women. An item on the status of women has already been included in the agenda of the Panel.

13. In response to General Assembly resolution 48/218 E of 23 December 1993, the Secretariat has been requested to establish a Task Force to implement a new system of accountability and responsibility. The Task Force is expected to consider, among other issues, criteria to assess the success of managers in implementing the targets for enhancement of the status of women in the Secretariat.

14. To redress the geographical imbalance of women from developing countries, the Office of the Focal Point, in collaboration with other divisions of the Office of Human Resources Management, has developed a number of strategies for using the roster of women, the national competitive and G to P examinations, as well as field visits and national advertising campaigns, to reach women and facilitate their entry into the system.

15. The procedures for dealing with sexual harassment (ST/AI/379 of 29 October 1992) have been widely distributed throughout the Secretariat, and the top managers of all departments and offices have been made personally accountable to the Secretary-General for implementation of the guidelines.

16. With the approach of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, in 1995, achievement of the targets for the advancement of women in the Secretariat assumes even more importance not only because the United Nations must set an example or because women have the right to equal opportunities, but also because having many capable women at all levels in the United Nations will undoubtedly have an enormous impact on the achievement of the goals of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.